

The Invitation Of A Lifetime

Mark 1:16-20

All of us like to receive invitations. The King of heaven invites us to be His guest. All through the Bible, He is standing with outstretched arms, crying, “*Come unto Me.*” This is Jesus favorite word, the word “Come.” It is a simple word, but all the wonders of heaven and earth are wrapped up in it.

The word “*Come*” is used 678 times in the Bible. Beginning in Genesis 7:1 with God’s invitation for Noah and his family to “*come in to the Ark,*” the Bible is filled with invitations for people to come to God. It is clear that God is interested in having a relationship with us.

Even on the last page of the last chapter in the last book of the Bible, God is still inviting people to come to Him. “*The Spirit and the Bride say Come. And let him that hears say, Come. Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.*” Revelation 21:12

In this verse, the Spirit of God takes one last opportunity to invite people to enter into a relationship with Jesus.

God is interested in us. He cares about us. He cares about how we live and where we will spend eternity. God cares through *His Words* – John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” God cares about us through *His Works* – Romans 5:8, “*But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”

God cares, but we must respond to Him by repenting of our sins and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross to pay for man’s sin. He rose from the dead to guarantee us everlasting life. He even went back to Heaven to pray for you.

1. The Invitation To Surrender

One day Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee and he saw a group of brothers who were fishermen. Eh gives them an invitation. He called them to be his followers. Simeon Peter has this recollection but Mark writes it for. Peter, James, John, and Andrew became the first to do what millions have done since. They followed Jesus. They left their nets and chose Christ. The attempted to walk in the shadow of Christ. The invitation is to follow him and he will “make us.” He is about making us better. Improving us. Growing us. He knows that life can break us but he wants to restore us. He just needs us to follow him.

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you to be fishers for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, mending their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” Mark 1:16-20

One day Jesus was passing through Jericho, and a man named Zaccheus lived there. He was a tax-collector for the Roman government. He had riches, but he was not happy. The people hated him. He was a lonely man with no peace in his heart. He had heard that this strange man, Jesus, loved all kinds of people. So, when Jesus came to Jericho, Zaccheus rushed to see Him. Zaccheus was a man of little stature, and he could not see Jesus for the crowd, so he climbed up in a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of the Savior. Soon Jesus stopped under that very tree and looked up at Zaccheus. Jesus said, “*Come down, Zaccheus. I am going to your house today.*” Zaccheus hurried down and took Jesus home for dinner. He was so moved by the presence of Christ that he said, “*Lord, I’ll give half of all I have to the poor. And if I have cheated any man I will pay him back four-fold.*” Luke 19:1-8.

What a change Jesus made in this man's life! He experienced salvation and marvelous new life. People today want to see the Savior, but climb the wrong tree. They trust in their church membership, their gifts, their good works, their character. "If you want salvation, come down to Me. Humble yourself. Submit to Me and My Father's will."

"God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son." Romans 8:29

He wants to shape our life to be like Christ. To be patient like he's patient and love like he's loving. He wants us to be restored to our original intent. No one has greater dreams for you than Christ does. As you follow Christ you become more and more like Christ. Jesus felt no guilt. He wants us to feel no guilt. Jesus had no bad habits. Jesus wants to do away with our bad habits. Jesus had no fear. He wants us to live without fear. Jesus understood the difference between right and wrong and He wants us to be the same.

Jesus wants us to surrender to His control in our lives. He desires that we bow to His authority. He is not calling us to walk alone. He is calling us to walk with Him. He knows that we cannot live this life on our own. He goes with us and enables us to live for Him as we yield to His control in our lives.

"But you were taught to be made new in your hearts, to become a new person. That new person is made to be like God—made to be truly good and holy." Ephesians 4:23-24

He calls us to live a holy life in an unclean world. In 2 Corinthians 6:17 we read, *"Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord..."* As Christians, we must separate ourselves from the world and live lives that are devoted to God. It is said that the Tigris River flows straight through a certain lake, yet the river does not mingle its waters with the water of the lake. It retains a taste and color different from the lake. We Christians must be like that. We are not to take on the color of the world, but we are to retain the likeness of Christ.

Some fish live in a salty sea, but their flesh is not salty. Pearls live in the dark ocean caves, but they are not black. So we can live in a sinful world, yet not be of that world. (Romans 12:1-2; James 1:27; 4:4; 1 John 2: 15, 16; Revelation 21:27).

In the Song of Solomon, the bridegroom says to the bride, *"Come with me."* Song of Solomon 4:8

During the Civil War, a father went out upon a battlefield looking for his son who had been wounded. On every side, he heard the groans of the wounded and the dying, but he could not locate his son. Finally, he lifted up his voice and cried out, "John Hardin, your father is calling you." He repeated this cry over and over again, but there was no answer. Finally, he heard a faint voice in the distance crying, "Here, father, here I am."

One day Jesus called a rich young ruler to follow him but he chose his things rather than the savior. But Jesus still loved him and invited him to follow him. He said to him, *"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."* Mark 10:21

Jesus stands today upon the battlefield of life. He says, "I am calling you, I love you, and I want to save you. Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

"Come, let us talk about these things. Though your sins are like scarlet, they can be as white as snow." The word "come" is *"imperative."* It is a command. God is reaching out to a wayward, sinful people and He is calling them back to Him. This is amazing because God knows how they have been living. He knows how they have treated His Law. He knows the vileness and the depths of their sins. He knows how wicked they have

become. Yet, He still loves them and reaches out to them in love, to extend grace and mercy to them, if they will repent.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

“Come now, let us reason together; says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” Isaiah 1:18

The words “scarlet” and “crimson” refer to dye that was extracted from both shellfish and a certain type of insect. When white garments were dyed with these colors, they could never be made white again. These colors were both colorfast and indelible. Once they were dyed, no human means could ever return them to their pure state. God describes the sins of Israel as being like a garment stained scarlet and crimson. They were dirty, and nothing they could ever do would take the stain away. In ancient times, once a garment was stained, it could never be made perfect again. Yet, if they would just respond to Him and repent of their sins, He had the power to make them “whiter than snow,” and as pure as “wool.” He had the ability to take away the stain of their sin and make them clean again!

- Jesus told the disciples, *“Come, follow me”* (Matt 4:19).
- Jesus told the little children, *“Come to me”* (Mark 10:14).
- All those who are thirsty are told to *“Come”* (Isaiah 55:1, John 7:37).
- All who are weary and burdened are told to *“Come”* (Matthew 11:28).
- All those who are hungry are told to *“Come to the banqueting table”* (Luke 14:17).
- All those who need rest are invited to *“Come”* (Mark 6:31).
- When Peter wondered if he could walk on water, Jesus said, *“Come”* (Matt. 14:28-29).
- When Zacchaeus was hiding in the tree, Jesus said, *“Come down immediately”* (Luke 19:5).
- The Bible ends with an invitation to *“Come for the free gift of the water of life”* (Revelation 22:17).

Jesus is inviting you to come home to the Father today.

If you need salvation, Jesus says, *“Come!”*

If you need peace in your life, Jesus says, *“Come!”*

If you need healing, Jesus says, *“Come!”*

If you are living far away from God, Jesus says, *“Come!”*

No matter how far away you are from God, Jesus says, *“Come!”*

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus called people to come to Him – for salvation, healing, rest, and fulfillment.

What do you need to leave behind so you can fully follow Christ? This is the time to walk away from some things and let go of some anger, some resentments, something that hinders you because you are being remade into his image.

“Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” Mark 1:16-20

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

2. The Invitation To Receive Strength

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:28-29

Does the word “weary” ever describe your life? Do you ever feel like you have reached the end of your rope and there simply isn't enough rope left with which to tie a knot? These are the kinds of people Jesus is addressing in these verses.

Ever get tired? Ever feel a need for rest? We are a weary people because we rush from one activity to the other. We work long hours and fill our calendars with too many obligations. The fact that we need rest makes this invitation from Jesus so very appealing.

It is one thing to experience physical fatigue, but I believe there are other kinds of fatigue that are far worse and far more debilitating. There is mental fatigue, emotional fatigue, and spiritual fatigue. The only remedy for physical fatigue is sleep, but the only remedy for the other kind of fatigues is rest. There is a difference. You can go to a drugstore and buy something that will put you to sleep, but you can't buy anything that will give you the kind of rest you need for your heart and your soul and your mind.

We get overloaded, overworked, overcommitted, overmatched, overextended, and overanxious. Do you ever feel like your emotional tank is empty and you are just running on fumes?

The group that Jesus is calling unto Himself is “all.” That is anyone, anywhere who hears the invitation from the Son of God can come and can find salvation.

The word “*labor*” is used to describe the exhaustion of a soldier in battle or a messenger who had run many miles to deliver his message. It means working to the point of absolute exhaustion.

The second word pictures a ship loaded with so much weight that it is sinking or an animal that has so much weight it is collapsing. In other words, he is talking to people who are so tired they can't go any further and are so burdened they can't take anymore. He is talking about people who need a rest stop.

If you are tired of living on edge, tired of a life that is nothing more than another day and another dollar, tired of that feeling that all you are doing is marking time and taking space, you are burdened down and beaten up, you walk and are ready to quit, then Jesus, Himself, has a word for you.

“rest for your souls” Matthew 11:29

“rest” = “*quietness, calmness, peace, refreshment.*” He is not talking about physical rest, but He is talking about emotional and spiritual rest. Most people are weary today. Henry David Thoreau said, “*Most men lead lives of quiet desperation.*” Many are troubled and agitated in their souls, and they try to find rest in all the wrong places. People look everywhere and try everything in the effort to find rest for their souls. No thing and no one in this world can give you the peace and rest you seek.

While people run here and there trying to find peace, Jesus says, so simply and so calmly, “*Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.*” There is a place of rest; a place of quietness; a place of peace; and His name is Jesus. He invites you to come to Him to find the rest your soul seeks. People are looking, running, seeking, struggling, striving, fighting, loving, rushing, and searching, all in an effort to find what only Jesus Christ can give.

There is a place of rest for the weary soul, and that place of rest is Jesus Christ. In these verses, through a series of commands, Jesus invites you and me to enter that place of spiritual rest. Let's examine His invitation with the thought, *There Is A Place Of Rest.*

The word “*learn*” is the same word that is translated “*disciple*.” Jesus is looking for people who will lay everything on the line as He did and serve Him with no reservations.

The word “*easy*” means “*fits well*.” Jesus was a carpenter. He will design a yoke that will fit us perfectly. His burden is “*light*.” As we put our shoulder to the path He has chosen for us, there will be burdens along the way.

Take all these burdens that are weighing you down and beating you up, just set them down and come into the presence of Jesus. This is where so many people miss it, because so many people who are tired, burned out, frustrated, and stressed, they can't find any rest, because they keep looking for it in the wrong places. People try to party their problems away, so they drink, do drugs, hop from bed to bed, and thrill to thrill looking for rest, but rest doesn't come.

The man who founded the Salvation Army was William Booth.

People who knew Mr. Booth said he was one of the most contented, joyful, happy, satisfied, at rest people they ever knew. He never had a lot, wasn't a rich man, although he could have been wealthy. He put most of the money he made back into the organization. No matter how stressful life would get for everyone else around him, William Booth always seemed to just be at rest and have perfect peace. Someone once asked him this question, “Mr. Booth, what is the secret to the peace in your life? How is it that you can rest when no one else can?” Mr. Booth replied, “Because I never say, ‘No’ to the Lord.” This was a man who had found the right Master. This was a man who had put on the yoke of Jesus and he found that yoke easy and that burden to be light.

3. THE INVITATION OF CELEBRATION

When John, the beloved disciple, was on the Isle of Patmos, he said that a door in heaven opened up and he heard a voice like a trumpet, saying, “*Come up here*.” Revelation 4:1

Some day, Jesus is coming again to take His followers to the eternal city which He has prepared. They will see the golden streets, the walls made of precious stones, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the angels, and enjoy the peace and happiness of heaven forever and ever. What a blessed hope! Wars may rage, storms may come, sorrows may sweep over the soul, but the Christian can look up and say, “I have Christ, I have hope, and I have a home in heaven because of Christ.”

"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes, take the water of life without cost." - Revelation 22:17

There is one word in the Bible that I believe must be one of God's favorites. If you took every word out of the Scripture except this one, you would still have enough good news to proclaim to the ages. It was the favorite word on the lips of Jesus as He walked this earth. It is the word “Come.” Come is the word of invitation.

The Holy Spirit and the Bride of Christ are inviting the Lord Jesus to return to this earth. Jesus has just made a promise in Revelation 22:12-13 that He is going to return. He is coming with His reward, Revelation 22:12. He is coming to bring about the consummation of all things, Revelation 22:13. He is coming to bring the light of His glory to a world trapped in darkness, Revelation 22:16

So, the Holy Spirit and the Bride of Christ extend an invitation to Jesus to hasten His return. The Spirit does so because He longs for Jesus to be enthroned as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He desires the Lord's glory! The Bride of Christ invited Him to hasten His return because she longs to be with the One Who loved her enough to die on the cross to save her from her sins.

- **THE CANDIDATES OF THIS INVITATION**

“And let him that is thirsty come, and whosoever will...” Revelation 22:17

This invitation to come to Jesus is made available to two types of people.

“Him That Is Thirsty” refers to those who have been drinking from the stagnant pools of this world and long for something more. This world and its allurements promise satisfaction to those who pursue them, but neither this world nor anything it can offer will ever be able to provide complete satisfaction. The pools of sin and self-satisfaction offered by the world offer the promise of unending pleasure and satisfaction, but they only deliver disappointment and death. These are the people our Lord is addressing in this verse. He is addressing people who have looked everywhere for fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness. They are invited to come to Jesus to find the things they desire. Those who understand that there must be more to life are invited to come to Jesus. If there is a hunger in your soul for more than you have, you are invited to come. If you have tried everything else in this world and you are fed up with the lies and emptiness of sin and what it has to offer you, you are invited to come. If you are longing for more than you have now, you are invited to come.

“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” John 7:38-40

“Whoever wishes” This speaks to anyone who is willing to come to Jesus.

Are you a candidate for this invitation? Are you thirsty? Are you willing to come to Jesus? If so, you can be saved, if you will come!

The word *“freely”* means *“a gift.”* It refers to *“a gift that is given to someone without reason. It speaks of something that is given just because the giver can give it.”*

Salvation is given as a free gift because Jesus has already paid the entire bill. Salvation may be free for us, but God paid a high price to achieve it. When Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood, He forever satisfied God’s demands regarding sin, 1 John 2:2. He paid the price for sin, and now, there is nothing for the lost sinner to do but accept the invitation and come to Jesus. I praise God that salvation is a free gift!

Every sin is immediately forgiven. – Psa. 103:12, 1 John 1:7

We are adopted into the family of God. – Rom. 8:15

We become a child of God. – 1 John 3:1-2

We receive eternal life. – John 6:47

We are given the promise of eternal salvation. – John 10:28; 1 Pet. 1:5

We are made a citizen of Heaven. – Phil. 3:20

We are promised a mansion in Heaven. – John 14:1-3

We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. – 1 Cor. 12:13; John 14:23

We are promised His presence in this life. – Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20

We are promised His provision in this life. – Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:19

We are given peace with God. – John 14:27

We are made a new creature. – 2 Cor. 5:17

We are given a brand new life. – 1 Cor. 6:9-11

We have our name written in the Lamb’s book of life. – Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3

We are seated with Christ in heavenly places. – Eph. 2:6

We receive the blessed hope of the Rapture. – Titus 2:13

“Let him take the water of life...”

The phrase “*water of life*” refers to the Gospel message. The Gospel message is a clear, simple message. It is articulated in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. The Gospel message is this: God loved lost sinners so much that He sent His Son Jesus into this world. Jesus went to the cross and died in the place of sinners. He was innocent, but He died for the guilty, 2 Corinthians 5:21. His death on the cross paid the price for sin and forever satisfied God. After He died, He was buried. Three days later Jesus rose again from the dead. Then, He ascended back into Heaven, where He lives today to receive and save all those who receive the message of God.

When this message is preached, the Spirit of God creates a desire within the hearts of lost people to come to Jesus. All those who will come to Jesus and receive the “*water of life*” will be saved. Here is what must happen for the lost sinner to come to Jesus, Romans 10:9,13. If that takes place, salvation will always be the result!

Have you received the gift? Have you drunk deeply of the “water of life”? God gave everything He had to save your soul. Have you received His gift for your soul’s salvation?